

# Cowboys

*In Winning the West,  
It was often;*

**Cows  
vs.  
Plows!**



## COWBOYS' PRAYER

O Lord, I've never lived where churches grow;  
I've loved creation better as it stood  
That day you finished it, so long ago,  
And looked upon your work and called it good.

Just let me live my life as I've begun!  
And give me work that's open to the sky;  
Make me a partner of the wind and sun,  
And I won't ask a life that's soft and high.

Make me as big and open as the plains;  
As honest as the horse between my knees;  
Clean as the wind that blows behind the rains;  
Free as the hawk that circles down the breeze.

Just keep an eye on all that's done and said;  
Just right me sometime when I turn aside;  
And guide me on the long, dim trail ahead—  
That stretches upward towards the Great Divide.

*Author Unknown*



Compote



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## GRANDMOTHER'S COOKSTOVE

Grandmother's cookstove stood in the corner.  
Beside it the woodbox was piled with pine knots.

The long kitchen window looked over the meadows,  
Where Grandmother stood, scrubbing worn copper pots.

The handmade pine table that stood by the window  
Was washed till it shone like the clean kitchen floor.

Geraniums bloomed on a shelf, and the fragrance  
Of spices and fresh bread seeped under the door.

Grandmother's cookstove was trimmed with bright nickel.

She painted the lids, and she brushed it at night.

With a wide turkey wing that she kept for that purpose.

On the table nearby burned a kerosene light.

What cookies she baked there! What good buckwheat pancakes!

What gingerbread men for the children who came

Secure in the knowledge that Grandmother's cookstove

Like Grandmother's heart, held a warm steady flame!

—ANNE CAMPBELL

## The Boy in the Middle

By Robert P. Tristram Coffin

Measure the family by the middle boy;  
If he gets on the family will thrive.  
The others should be lively sons, but he  
Has to be more natively alive.

He has to keep his shape and rights between  
The upper and the lower stones of the mill,  
The youths and the babies; so he grows good eyes,

Tough muscles, and a chin all spikes and will.

He learns humility by wearing pants  
Cut from the cloth his brothers have gone through;

His thoughts have plenty chances to mature,  
Since he's the one the rest do talking to.

Big brothers and the baby sit on him  
And mold him right for mankind and the good;

He gets the jobs the others do not want,  
Not splitting, but just lugging in the wood.

Too old to baby and too late to love,  
He is the child the parents think of last;  
In the true center of the house he sits  
Quiet and sees the household hurtle past.

Likely his ears are just a shade too wide,  
His eyes a blue that is just off a jot;  
He looks like neither parent, but himself;  
He is the wistful boy that is forgot.

Pity him not, for he is so himself  
Something happens deep in his eyes and mind;

He grows into woods as woodcocks do,  
And walks and talks with Zeus, with patched behind.

When wars are to be fought or poems made,  
In times when it seems sure the sky will fall,  
It may well turn out the one-horse farms'  
Middle boys are the bumper crop.

Western Farm Life

Jan. 1, 1915

## COWBOY



Erving Galloway

The American Cowboy has always been a symbol of the strength and vigor of the colorful "Wild West."

**COWBOY.** Men who take care of large herds of cattle are called *cowboys* or *cowhands*. American cowboys gained fame in the days of the western frontier. The dangerous lives they led, the sad songs they sang, and the colorful vocabulary they used have all become a part of American folklore.

Cowboys are known by various other names. Early cowboys were called *cowpokes* or *cowpunchers*, because they used sticks to poke cattle onto loading ramps. *Wranglers* are cowboys who look after the horses on a ranch. Mexicans call a cowboy a *vaquero*, and this name has become *badgero* in English. The South American name for cowboy is *gaucha*. Many cowboys today prefer to be called *cowhands*. Because they are hired *hands*, or workers, who tend cows. Cowboys usually call all cattle *cows*, regardless of whether the animals are young or old, steers or cows.

Western cowboys became important in the late 1800's after the Civil War. They worked on ranches in Texas, Montana, and other Western States. They spent long, hard weeks driving cattle from the ranches to railroad towns where the cattle were shipped east. Many cowboy songs and tales originated on these "long drives" along western trails.

There have probably never been more than about 100,000 cowboys. But their lonely jobs, their difficult work, and their part in building the West have given cowboys an importance far beyond their numbers.

For a description of cowboy life today, see **RANCHING**.

### A Cowboy's Equipment

**His Horse** was a cowboy's most precious possession in frontier days. It was his only means of transportation. On the trails, a sure-footed horse might mean the difference between life and death for a cowhand. If a herd stampeded, the cowboy depended on his horse to help *lead* the cattle (get them under control). A horse was so valuable that a cowboy might give all the water in his canteen to his horse, even if it means that he himself had to go thirsty.

All cowboys had to be good horsemen, because they actually "lived in the saddle." Cowhands must still be able to ride well. Almost every cowboy owned a horse of his own, and possibly a spare one. But, on the ranch, he might have about six horses for his own use. These horses belonged to the ranch owner, who assigned them to the cowboys. No cowboy was allowed to ride a horse assigned to another man. A day on the trail might involve so much work that a horse often needed several days to recover. Most cowboys saved their best horses for night work, because neither horse nor rider could afford to make mistakes in the darkness.

A horse wrangler kept ranch horses together. He made sure that the right horse was ready when a cowboy needed it. Cowboys on a ranch sometimes held *horse roundups* to count their horses. At one time or another, most cowboys took turns at *breaking* (taming) wild horses. But younger cowboys usually did most of the breaking. Montana cowboys were known as the best "bronc busters."

Cowhands still use heavier and larger equipment than horsemen in the East. A Western saddle is large and roomy. It has a sturdy *pommel* (horn) that the cowboy can lash his rope to or hold on to when necessary. The *cantle* (back of the saddle) curves up to give the rider better support. A cowhand can even take short naps in his saddle without fear of falling off. He can also use his saddle as a pillow when he stretches on the ground. See **SADDLE**.

The early Spanish explorers brought the horse to North America. Some of their horses broke loose and ran wild on the western plains. Gradually, the Indians captured horses and learned to use them for their fast hit-and-run attacks on each other and on white men. Mexican *vaqueros* began to tend cattle from horseback. When the American cowboy came along, he learned to use the horse as an aid both in fighting and in handling cattle. Wild horses usually ran in *packs*, like wolves, ready to be taken by anyone smart enough and fast enough to catch and tame them. The earliest horse used was the *mustang*, which originally came from Arabia. Mustangs were smaller than average horses, but had greater endurance. They also had what the cowboys called "cow sense" in directing and searching out the cattle. See **HORSE** (color pictures).

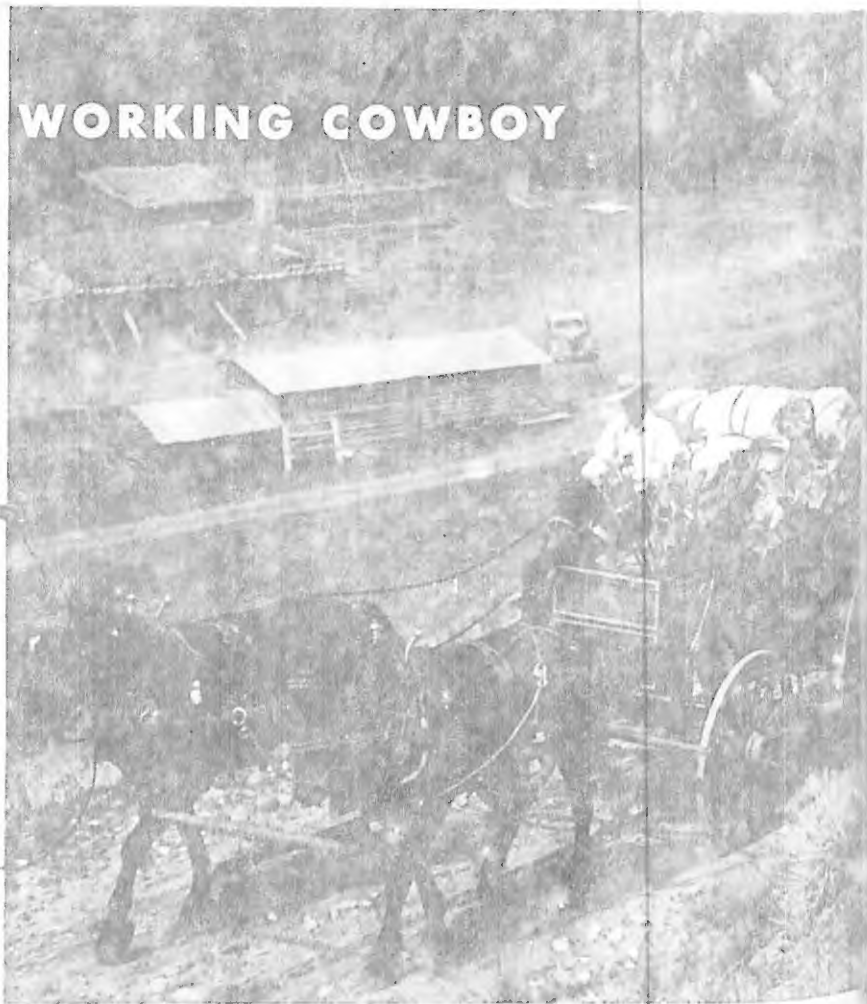
**His Clothing** evolved from practical needs, and has changed little since early days. The cowboy started

# THE WORKING COWBOY



Union Pacific

**A Good Horse and a Strong Rope** have long been regarded as the two things a cowboy must have for his work.

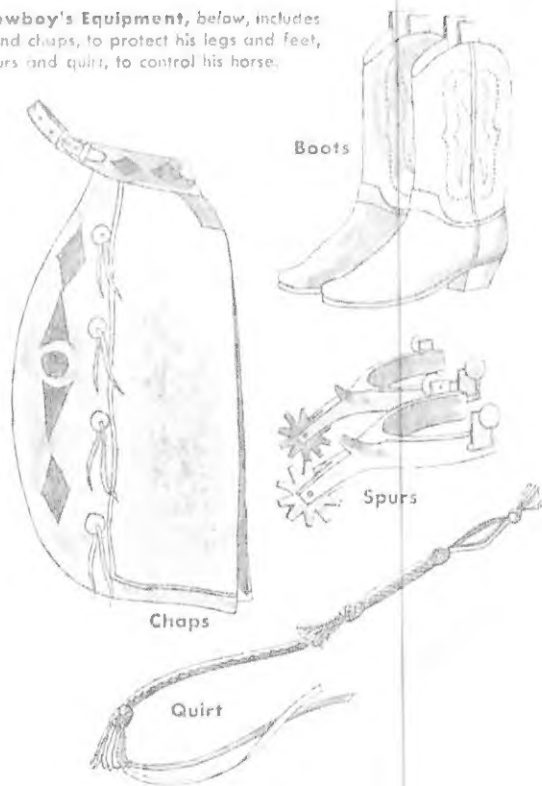


Charles J. Heblon

**The Cowboy's Equipment, below,** includes boots and chaps, to protect his legs and feet, and spurs and quirt, to control his horse.

**Saddles** represent a major investment, and each cowhand picks his with great care. The hands no longer "live in the saddle," but they still need strong, well-made saddles and harnesses.

U.S.A.







"Dick" Whittington

but were bulkier and less handy. The knife is still useful, and, in wilder areas, cowhands still carry guns.

**His Rope** was an early cowboy's most important tool. He used it to catch cattle, to hold his horse, to pull his wagons across muddy rivers and swamps, to tie his packs in place, and to kill snakes. As Ramon F. Adams said in his book *Western Work*, the cowboy "does everything with his rope except eat with it."

Early ropes were made of horsehair, grass, or hemp. Most ropes today are made of nylon. A rope may be from 30 to 70 feet (9 to 21 meters) long. It has a small *honda knot*, or *fixed loop*, at one end. The cowboy passes the other end of the rope through this knot to form a loop. Then he can pull the rope tight or slack it off after he has caught an animal. Cowboys in the Southwest use the word *lariat* (from the Spanish *la reata*, meaning *the rope*). Pacific Coast cowboys sometimes use the word *lasso* to mean *to rope*. See **KNOTS, HITCHES, AND SPLICES**.

#### The Life of a Cowboy

Cowboys often live lonely lives. Most ranches lie far from even the smallest towns. A cowhand may go for months without seeing anyone besides the dozen or so men with whom he works. Early cowhands labored long hours, especially on the trail. They always suffered from lack of sleep, and often from broken bones caused by spills from a horse.

**On the Ranch**, the cowboy of early days served as an odd-job man, doing whatever was necessary. He might

#### COWBOY TERMS

**Bronco** is a wild horse.  
**Chuck** is food.  
**Cinch** is a band that goes around a horse's body to hold a saddle or a pack.  
**Dogie** is a calf whose mother has left it.  
**Hackamore** is a bitless bridle that controls the horse by pressure on its nose and jaw.  
**Kidney Pad** refers to a small saddle used by Easterners.  
**Maverick** is an unbranded cow whose owner is unknown.  
**Muley** is a hornless cow. Cowboys do not like to herd muleys.  
**Mustang** means any wild horse.  
**Necktie Social** was a hanging in early days.  
**Nester** was a squatter who settled on government land, usually to farm.  
**On the Dodge** means hiding from the police.  
**Outlaw** is any animal that is particularly wild. The term may also be used for a criminal.  
**Paint** is a horse with irregular patches of white.  
**Quirt** is a cowboy's whip.  
**Remuda** is a range outfit's collection of saddle horses. No mares are permitted in a remuda.  
**Road Agent** is cowboy slang for a robber.  
**Rustler** is a cattle thief.  
**Shindig** is a cowboy dance.  
**Sold His Saddle**. If a man has "sold his saddle," it means that he is disgraced.  
**Stetson** is any cowboy hat, regardless of the manufacturer.  
**String** is a cowboy's mount, or line, of horses.  
**Tenderfoot** is a person who is new to a job.  
**Waddy** is a temporary hand hired when a ranch is short of help.

**Roping a Calf** takes speed, strength, and skill. The cowhand must hold the frightened animal down until he can tie its legs. Roping is a favorite display at rodeos.

pitch hay, hunt stray animals, clear brush, break horses, or mend gear, or equipment. He lived in a bunkhouse with the other hands, apart from the main house, where the ranch owner lived. The cowboy's main job was to watch and protect the cattle as they grazed on the range. He often *rode fence*, or patrolled the range to see whether any fences needed repairing. Even today, when a cowhand works out on the range, he camps wherever night overtakes him. He spreads his bedroll on the ground to sleep in. A cowboy always sleeps with "one ear cocked," listening for any unusual activity or restlessness in the herd.

Cowboys ate a limited variety of food, including fresh beef, salted pork and bacon, beans, and sourdough biscuits. A ranch cook, or *peake*, prepared the food and rode the range with a *chuck wagon* (see **CHUCK WAGON**). The men ate from tin plates while sitting on the ground, resting on rocks, or standing. They drank coffee from tin cups or cans. They ate few fresh fruits, and drank little fresh milk. This still holds true in many areas.

Most cowboys spent their spare time talking, playing cards, reading, or just being bored. On the trail, they were usually too tired at night to do more than swap a few tall tales or play some practical joke. On the rare occasions when a cowboy did leave the ranch and go to town, he visited a barber, shopped, and talked with other cowboys. On the whole, in spite of motion-picture attitudes, most cowboys behaved as well as any other people who had been away from civilization for months.

**The Roundup** is a business period when a ranch owner



**A Ranch Outfit** of the Old West, left, included horse-drawn wagons and strings of saddle horses for the cowboys on the range. The hands often "rode fence," repairing breaks in the barbed wire, below. Today's hands often ride herd on their cattle from a jeep, bottom.



Howe Hartley  
From *Oregonian* (1900s)



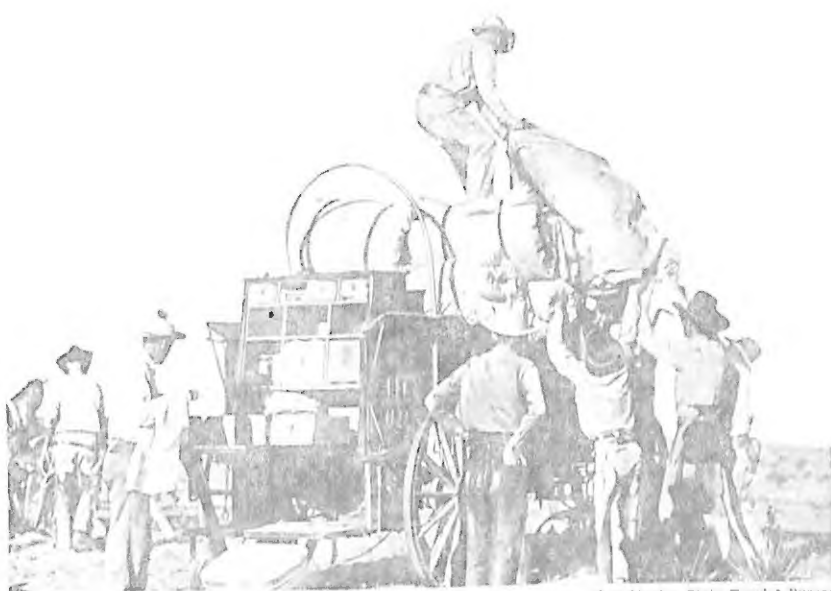
Look Magazine

wearing his trousers tight because he did not want loose cloth flapping or catching brush as he chased cattle. His trousers are still called *Lee's*. He began wearing leather *chaps* to keep thorns and branches from tearing his trousers, and to protect his legs from rubbing during the long hours he spends in the saddle. His broad-brimmed *sombrero* (hat) was designed to keep the sun and wind out of his eyes, and to have enough brim to catch water in the rain. The hat's deep crown helped keep it on the cowboy's head when he rode madly after a stampeding herd. It could also be used as a bucket. A sombrero was made large enough and sturdy enough to serve as a sort of whip. The cowboy could wave it to direct a surging herd of cattle, to urge his horse on, or to

send signals to his companions a couple of hills away.

The cowboy's high-heeled boots also began for practical reasons. The heel gave him a hold in the stirrup. The length of the boot supported his ankles and provided warmth. A cowboy's neckerchief or bandana could be pulled over his face as a filter against dust.

An early cowboy's equipment always included a knife and a gun. The knife served a variety of purposes, from mending bridles to spearing a piece of hot *chuck* (food). The pistol was usually a Colt revolver with about a seven-inch barrel (see **REVOLVER**). The cowboy used it to frighten cattle and make them move, and to defend the herd from bandits. Some cowboys carried Winchester rifles. The rifles had better range and accuracy,



The Chuck Wagon carried much more than just food. When cowhands of the Old West lived on the range, they carried their bed rolls on the wagon. It also had room for other equipment.

New Mexico State Tourist Bureau

gets an accurate idea of how many cattle he actually owns. In early days, cattle from various ranches in an area grazed together on the great open range. Twice a year, cowboys rounded up the cattle, and herded them to a central place. Men from each ranch sorted out their own cattle according to the animals' markings. Then they *branded*, or marked, new calves, selected older cattle to go to market, and separated diseased or undersized animals from the regular herd. Roundups occupied an important place in a cowboy's life. They required more skill than any other phase of his work. As a result, there was a certain rivalry about a roundup, somewhat like that of an athletic contest.

A roundup was also a social event. As many as 10 ranches might be represented at a single roundup. That would mean visiting with old friends as well as working. On northern ranges, as in Montana and Wyoming, roundups might attract as many as 300 cowboys. The cowboys often held a large celebration called a *rodeo* after they finished their work (see ROPE). They competed in bareback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, and other tests of skill. Rodeos are popular today, but are more commercialized.

**Branding Cattle** was an early means of reducing the chance of their being lost or stolen. Each ranch still has its own *brand*, or scar design, placed in a certain position on all its cattle. Cattle owners register their brands with county or state authorities. For example, a brand may be described as a *lowerleaf* placed *right side, flank*; or the letter *R* placed *left side, jaw*. Brands are respected throughout the West. In early days, a calf could wander off the range in Texas and travel all the way to Montana. Anyone who found the calf in Montana would check to see whose brand it bore. He would then arrange to return the calf to its owner. Sometimes a dishonest cowboy would try to change the brand on a stray cow to make it appear that the stray wore his brand. But if a thief were caught tampering with another man's brand, he usually met swift and stern justice.

Branding is an important feature of a roundup. After the cattle from each ranch have been herded into a

corral, or enclosed yard, the cowboys ride among them to select new calves to be branded. This process is called *cutting out*. Both horse and rider need great skill to isolate a lone calf from a milling herd. Once a calf has been cut out, the men drive or drag it to a fire. A number of branding irons are kept red-hot in the flames. Some of the men drag the animal into position by the fire, and others apply one of the branding irons to its side. The resulting burn leaves a permanent scar in the animal's flesh. One man keeps *tally*, or scores the number of animals branded by each outfit.

Cowhands sometimes make other markings and clips on their cattle in order to recognize them easily. The most common markings are knife cuts on the animal's ears or on its *dewlap*, the skin under its neck. Each ranch has its own mark registered with the proper agency. Old-time ranch owners branded their horses, but most horses were not marked.

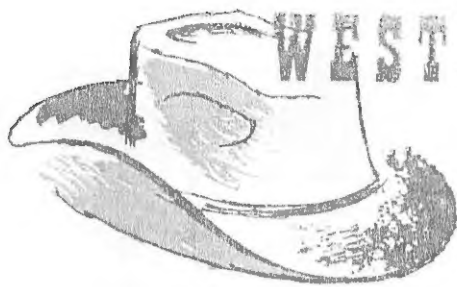
**The Cattle Drive.** Perhaps the most tiring work of an early cowboy was trailing a herd from the range to market. This "long drive" might mean moving hundreds of cattle over a great distance. The cattle plodded along with riders ahead, behind, and on both sides. The cowboys had to be able to get the herd across rivers, find watering places for it, guard it against Indian attack, protect it in bad weather, and head off stampedes that might scatter the cattle. Cowboys often sang songs to pass away the hours. A man on night watch would enjoy crooning softly to the herd. No matter how poor the cowboy's voice, it seemed to help soothe the cattle.

At the end of the trail lay the "cow town," where the cowboys delivered their herds. Most cow towns had a cemetery called *Boot Hill*. These Boot Hill cemeteries were filled with cowboys who had played a little too hard in the cow towns, and wound up getting shot.

#### History

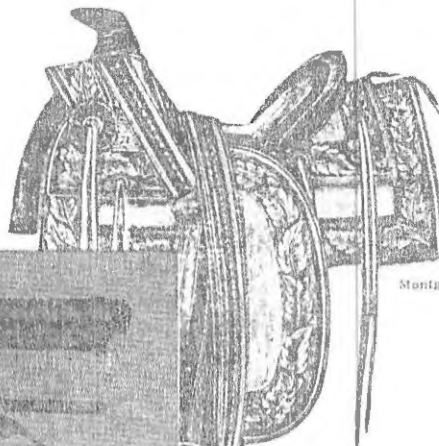
The name *cowboy* goes back to the Revolutionary War in America, but it has little to do with the cowboys of today. The first "cowboys" were Tories, or Americans who were loyal to England. They were called cowboys





# WESTERN FRONTIER

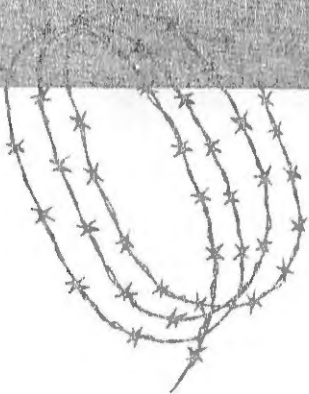
Famous Names of the West included John Stetson, maker of wide-brimmed hats, and Sam Colt, whose pistol was "the gun that won the West."



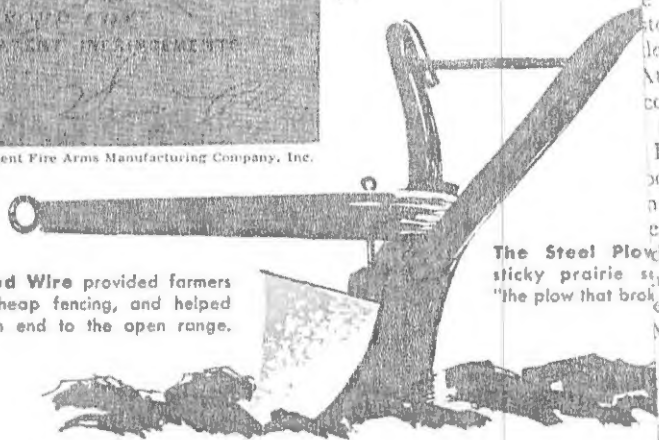
A Western Saddle has a curved horn in front, which held the cowboy's lasso.



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The Steel Plow broke up sticky prairie soil. "The plow that broke the prairie."

**WESTERN FRONTIER LIFE** marks one of the most exciting chapters in American history. The settlement of the West represented the dreams of gold-hungry prospectors, and of homesteaders whose back-breaking labor transformed barren plains into fields of grain. It is the story of cowboys and the open range. It is the drama of Indians and outlaws, of the trains and stagecoaches they attacked, and of the citizens who brought order to the frontier. It is a living tradition that symbolizes to men and women everywhere the American achievement of taming a wild and beautiful land.

The far western frontier appeared about 1850, and vanished about 1890. Adventurous settlers had crossed the Appalachian Mountains during the 1700's and pushed through the Cumberland Gap in the 1770's. They built homes along the Mississippi River a few

years later. Traders and scouts reached the Gulf Coast in the early 1800's. But the area west of the Mississippi—"the last frontier"—did not attract settlers until after 1850. The final period of settlement lasted from 1850 to 1890. For the story of western expansion in the United States, see **WESTWARD MOVEMENT**.

The western frontier produced many colorful characters. Some, such as Jesse James and Billy the Kid, were outlaws who "died with their boots on." Others, such as Wyatt Earp and "Wild Bill" Hickok, gained fame as fearless defenders of law and order. "Buffalo Bill" Cody—scout, Indian fighter, and showman—produced more interest in the West than anyone else. Other men, though less well-known, developed the area itself. Charles Goodnight

# Life of a cowboy is lonely, challenging

By Bill Willcox  
for The Associated Press

10-8-89

JACKSON, Wyo. — Bob Disney is rolling a cigarette in his primitive cowboy cabin deep in the Gros Ventre Mountains. He pinches tobacco from a cowhide pouch and forms a creamy white cigarette that contrasts with his roughly lined face and the dusty surroundings of the cabin.

Except for a plastic convenience store cup, the scene is reminiscent of a movie set for a Western. A bottle of Canadian Lord Calvert blended whiskey stands next to several decks of cards, which look right at home next to his .357 Colt revolver that serves as a "last resort in case of bear attack."

The man with the cigarette is a real cowboy spending his days doing what real cowboys do — looking after cattle.

On this particular cool evening, Disney is glad he took a job as a glo-

rified baby sitter for the 600 cows that are grazing nearby. The isolation feels good, and the only sound that breaks the pure silence of the mountains is a coyote howling in the distance.

Although many might consider his life a lonely existence, Disney claims that he rarely misses civilization.

"I'm not alone, really," he said. "I've got my dogs, my horses, God and Mother Nature. If I miss people all I've got to do is go to the Cowboy Bar (in Jackson) for a couple of hours and I've had my fill of noise and humans."

But there is one thing that Disney admits he misses in the mountains.

"I want to put an ad in the newspaper," he said. "Needed: one female, girl, ladyfriend . . . healthy. Must be willing to live under primitive conditions."

The physical challenges of the job extend past the time spent in a sad-

dle.

Without refrigeration, Disney must eat mostly stews of bacon, the only meat that keeps, potatoes, onions and canned vegetables. He eats only once a day, and a pot of stew will feed him for three days.

Unless he feels like bathing in a 40-degree stream, he must heat a tub of water on the campfire to take a bath.

Still he would not trade places or jobs with anyone, even though the average pay for herders is only about \$800 a month.

"Thank God for people like the Lucases that give people like me a job like this," he said, referring to the Phil Lucas family of Spring Gulch. "When you've got only yourself to satisfy, it's not too hard."



**Pint-size cowboy**  
more, 2, tries his hand at the  
Western Day Rodeo at the  
is part of West Fesle rodeo  
Sunday.



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**Pint-size cowpoke** — Jeremiah Fillmore, 2, tries his hand with a bull lasso at the Western Day Rodeo in Jenks, Okla. The rodeo is part of West Fest '92, which ends Sunday.

5-8-92





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*Architectural Digest* (ISSN 0003-8520) is published monthly by Architectural Digest Publishing Corp., a subsidiary of Knapp Communications Corporation, Cleon T. Knapp, chairman. Editorial and executive offices are located at 6300 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048, 213/965-3700. New York editorial office: 699 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021, 212/371-7820.

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Rates for the U.S.A., its territories and possessions: 12 issues, \$39.95; Canada and all other countries: 12 issues, \$59.95. Single issues in the U.S.A.: \$5.00; in Canada: \$6.00; \$5.00 in all other countries. If you are moving, renewing, have a question, or wish to have your name left off our mail advertisers' list, please enclose your subscription label with your correspondence for faster service. Please allow 8 weeks for a change of address. A new subscriber's first issue will be mailed within 8 weeks of order receipt. Address all correspondence pertaining to your subscription to *Architectural Digest*, P.O. Box 7193, Red Oak, IA 51591-0193, or call 800/234-4378. Direct non-subscription correspondence to editorial office.

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## ANTIQUES NOTEBOOK

### Cowboy Memorabilia—Spirited Pieces of the American Past

By Christopher Finch

THOUGH THE CLASSIC ERA of the American West lasted only a few decades, it bred a legion of myths. Yet in many ways the reality was even more dramatic than the hokum propagated by pulp novelists and Hollywood moviemakers. Styles of clothing that originated in the Old West—from blue jeans to cowboy boots—remain current throughout the world, as much in demand in Hamburg and Osaka as in Missoula or San Antonio, and increasingly collectors are seeking out the artifacts that inspired these fashion trends.

"Nothing is more American than a great pair of woolly chaps or a turn-of-the-century stockman's hat," says Sandy Winchell of Fighting Bear Antiques in Jackson, Wyoming. "The generation that grew up on John Wayne and *Bonanza*

now has disposable income available," adds her husband, Terry, "and it's been very natural for members of that generation to turn to western memorabilia." Whatever the reason, the artifacts of the cattle-drive era, and of the later dude ranch period, are enjoying a renaissance among collectors that has not been encountered since the 1950s.

"The present boom in cowboy collectibles began about five years ago," says Elmer Diederich, who deals in Old West artifacts in Big Timber, Montana, "but the last couple of years have been amazing. We've been seeing an increase in business of about forty percent a year."

"People who started out collecting Indian artifacts and American folk art are now turning their attention to the western field," notes Linda Kohn of High Noon, an auction house based in Los Angeles. "Cowboy collectibles are simply more affordable. A top-quality Indian basket will cost you thirty thousand dollars and upward. You can buy the best spurs available for between five thousand and eight thousand dollars."

Curiously, perhaps, the first sign of a revival in western collecting was the taste for kitsch items such as Tom Mix holsters and Hopalong



ABOVE: *Saddle*, Al Furstnow, Miles City, Montana, 1910. Leather, sheepskin and iron; 30" x 36". A full-flower carved saddle is representative of the fine craftsmanship of Al Furstnow, whose saddlery was one of the largest in the Northwest. Cowboys often had their saddles custom-made, with specifications depending on their location, personal preference and line of work. Flat Creek Saddle, Jackson, Wyoming. RIGHT: *Spurs*, G. S. Garcia, Elko, Nevada, 1920s. Iron and silver; 6½" long each. Mexican artisans were especially acclaimed for their spurs wrought in silver. Elmer Diederich, Big Timber, Montana.



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Cowboy Memorabilia—Spirited Pieces of the American Past  
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WILLIAM MATTHEWS

ABOVE: *Chaps*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, circa 1915. Leather and nickel; 38" x 36". Primarily used to protect cowboys from rough terrain, chaps were often embellished with rodeo motifs. Batwing-style chaps, fastened with snaps for ventilation and easy removal, became popular at the turn of the century. Old West Antiques, Cody, Wyoming. RIGHT: *Bridle*, Washington State Prison, Walla Walla, Washington, circa 1915. Horsehair and iron; approximately 20" x 8". Bridles composed of horsehair were frequently made by prisoners in western states and are prized by collectors today. High Noon, Los Angeles.



VICTORIA BRIDGES

Cassidy lunch boxes. The current boom, however, is in the field of authentic western antiques and high-quality western craft objects of the more recent past (such as bits and saddles custom-made for Hollywood cowboys). Not counting firearms—a subdivision of the field—the most commonly collected items are clothing, saddles and other examples of the leatherworker's craft, and metal pieces ranging from intricately decorated silver spurs to crudely functional branding irons. Specialized areas of western collecting include express company ephemera, gaming and mining equipment, and law enforcement memorabilia such as sheriffs' badges and handcuffs.

"There's also more interest in western furniture on the part of decorators," says Diederich. "I'm seeing a demand for things like horn chairs and hat racks."

"The western style is making inroads on the southwestern style," agrees Terry Winchell. "Any decent piece of pole furniture, as we call it out here, sells almost as soon as we get it in the store. Our specialty is the furniture of Thomas Molesworth, who built pieces for many of the grandest western hotels and dude ranches. About five years ago I sold Molesworth furnishings from a ranch in Jackson for forty-five thousand dollars. Last year I bought it all back for a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, and the price is still going up."

"There are two distinct types of collectors of western memorabilia," says Linda Kohn. "Some people are purists who are interested only in things worn or used by working cowboys in the classic era, which lasted till about 1910, maybe a little later in some areas. Others prefer the very elaborate things made for parades and dude ranches and western shows and movie stars in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s."

"One collector may prize a half-seat saddle from the 1870s," says Winchell. "Another may want one of the highly decorated saddles that you would have seen in the Rose Parade in the 1920s. One of the most spectacular western saddles I've seen came from the East Coast. It was ordered by someone who perhaps made one trip out West, then never used it again, so it is in virtually mint condition."

One of the attractions of western collectibles is that for the most part they were made by craftsmen who appreciated that their products were intended for hard and long service, so even well-used items are often in remarkably good condition. Cowboys would drive cattle from Texas to Wyoming and invest their earnings in a saddle to be custom-made by one of the great saddlemakers like E. L. Gallatin of Cheyenne, taking delivery at the conclusion of the following year's drive. The saddle was as important to the cowboy as the pickup truck is to his modern descendants. It was

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## ANTIQUES NOTEBOOK

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the essential tool of his trade, and it had to be durable. It was also his status symbol when he rode into town on a Saturday night, so he wanted it to be handsome too, even flashy.

Saddlemakers also made other wares—holsters, leather cuffs and even chaps. Metalworkers fashioned exquisite spurs and bits, sometimes embellished with typical western emblems such as the four suits from a pack of cards, representing luck. Some spurs—known as gal-legs—featured shanks in the shape of female legs, much in the way that truck drivers today decorate their bumpers with chrome silhouettes of pinups. Among the most sought-after western artifacts are prison-made spurs and bits. Men serving sentences in western jails were often permitted to produce these objects for sale, and having time on their hands, they lavished much care on the details.

Such items have survived in reasonable quantities, and the neophyte collector can enter the field for a relatively modest outlay. "It's still possible to buy a good pair of spurs for between a hundred and seventy-five and two hundred and fifty dollars," says Diederich. "I would advise the newcomer to buy objects that bear the maker's name. In the case of spurs, look for the name of well-known manufacturers like Buermann and North & Judd."

"At a recent auction," says Linda Kohn, "we sold several very nice pairs of spurs in the three-hundred- to three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar range, and for five hundred dollars there are many fine spurs available."

Terry Winchell reports that there is a strong interest in cowboy collectibles overseas, especially in Germany and Japan, and in all parts of the United States, but the prime market is still the West.

"In this part of the country, people collect cowboy boots or branding irons because it's part of their heritage. If an item comes into the store that's marked 'Wyoming Territory'—which means it was made before 1892

—then there's a huge local interest."

Kohn confirms the regional character of western collecting. "You'll find ranchers in Montana and Wyoming specializing in local artifacts. Similarly, Texas collectibles are snapped up mostly by Texans. California material is an exception to the rule. There are plenty of Californians who collect it, but it has wide appeal for collectors in other parts of the country." She attributes this to the fact that western memorabilia from California tends to be elaborate and showy, reflecting both the Spanish influence that has existed there since colonial days and the Hollywood influence that later reinforced this tendency toward the decorative.

Many forms of collecting derive, in part at least, from the desire to forge a link with some past period and culture, whether the England of Shakespeare, the France of Bonaparte or the Athens of Pericles. Collecting western memorabilia has a special urgency because the past it represents was just the day before yesterday, and the culture it binds us to evolved right here, on the North American continent. Few of us ride horses for a living or sleep under the stars anymore, but the world of the cowboy still resonates in contemporary American life. The code of the Old West surfaces in truck stops and boardrooms. The chili once served from chuck wagons remains as popular as ever in the age of the microwave.

Small wonder, then, that collectors will pay \$250 for a marshal's badge or \$2,500 for a fancy bridle. Such objects come loaded with meaning for most Americans, and the prices asked are extremely reasonable when compared with artifacts from other fields.

"It's an area of collecting that is just coming of age," says Linda Kohn. "Until recently, cowboy memorabilia didn't seem quite old enough to be taken seriously. Now we can see it in its historical context, and for the first time we are in a position to fully appreciate it. That means that this is a very exciting period for everyone involved." □



# A WYOMING AFFAIR

## Robert and Joy Lewis Outfit a 1930s Ranger's Cabin in Jackson

By Jeffrey Simpson



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL MARTIN

"Robert is fascinated by the West," says Joy Lewis (above, with her husband), "and he fell hard for a 1930s park ranger's log cabin in Jackson, Wyoming." RIGHT: "A great room with log stairs takes up half the cabin," she notes. The draped rug and blanket, above, are Navajo. Cyrus E. Dallin's *The Scout* stands before the window. Inset into the 1930s Molesworth sofa's pillows are Chimayó weavings. Grass matting from Stark.



ROBERT K. LEWIS and his wife, Joy, he a New York interior designer, she the proprietor of the Madison Avenue stationery business Mrs. John L. Strong Co., have deep-rooted connections to the American West that blossomed anew when Lewis took on a major project in Wyoming several years ago (see *Architectural Digest*, June 1992).

Joy Lewis grew up as a small-town minister's daughter in northern Wyoming, and one of her fondest memories is of going with a childhood friend to a log cabin in the mountains constructed by the friend's father. "It had bearskin rugs, beds built into the wall at one end of the main room

LEFT: An arrangement of memorabilia from Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, including photographs, a program, a cast-metal souvenir, a framed newspaper advertisement and postcards, fills an alcove under the balcony.

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